

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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(Engle announces U of I International Writing Program)

IOWA CITY, IOWA--The establishment of an International Writing Program, the only one of its kind in the world, was announced today at The University of Iowa by Professor Paul Engle.

The Program, which will bring young people here from abroad to write poetry, fiction, and drama, has been evolving for some years from the U of I Writers Workshop, which Engle directed for 25 years. Both the Program and the Workshop are divisions of the U of I English department.

In the past few days Engle has taken groups of writing students, who came from Asia, Europe, and Africa to enroll at the U of I, on outings to Illinois to the John Deere and Co. factory and office building, and to Des Moines to visit friends and the Art Center.

On one of the outings Engle announced an agreement with the Book-of-the-Month Club to provide an unabridged Random House dictionary to every present and future student in the International Program, and an arrangement with leading publishers of paperback books to provide each student with a basic American library of literature, criticism, history, and biography, possibly reaching 200 titles.

The Program is being financed by the University, business corporations, the federal government, small foundations, and other private sources, including a retired schoolteacher in Mason City.

Engle said, "Naturally I'm pleased that outside sources are willing to contribute to a University program, but money-raising is a very demanding and often disappointing experience. The only way funds can be raised from a variety of sources is by sacrificing time from the writing of your own books."

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Engle's aim is to raise enough money to bring 36 writers to the U of I every year from eastern and western Europe, the Near and Far East, Latin America, and Africa. Some will enroll as graduate students and become degree candidates, and others will have the status of visiting artists.

The program is also to include several American teaching assistants who are writers themselves, with knowledge of other languages, to help the international writers with their English writing and translating. Monthly talks about the current literary situation in their homelands will be given by the students, and visiting writers from other countries will be invited to address the group.

Engle plans occasional outings to farms, cities, and factories to give the students an authentic picture of American life outside a university town.

Some of the students are expected to enroll in the U of I's five-year-old Translation Workshop, directed by Professor Frederic Will, where they will be helped to render into English their own fiction and poetry or the work of classical writers in their native languages.

Will's workshop, also the only one of its kind, now has 25 students, half of whom are Americans translating European and Latin American works into English. Much of the output of the Workshop is published, and anthologies of translations from Chinese and Korean poetry are expected to go to press this year.

Engle, who is a member of the National Council on the Arts, believes the International Program will produce valuable contributions to American literary life while the students are here. For instance, Daniachew Worku from Ethiopia and Saduddin Shpoon from Afghanistan spent some of the past year translating classical poems from their own languages, Amharic and Pashto, into English.

All the international writing students who have worked at the U of I so far have returned home, a much higher percentage than found among visiting students studying sciences, said Engle. In their own countries they become centers of information on American life, lending American books and discussing their stay in the U.S., he said.

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The international students mix with the American members of the Writers Workshop, and are made to feel at home. An Asian recently wrote from his country, "How can I, a Buddhist, proud of my own culture, feel homesick for a small midwestern town in Iowa at New Year's, when I was so terribly cold there?"

Engle, Hua-ling Nieh, a Chinese novelist who is associate director of the Program, and Bienvenido Santos, a Filipino novelist and a member of the fiction staff at the U of I, accompanied a group of writing students to the John Deere Works in East Moline, to see combines being manufactured. From there they went to the Deere and Co. administrative building, one of the last structures designed by Eero Saarinen. Later they were guests of William A. Hewitt, Deere president, at his home, and Mrs. Hewitt took them to Friendship Farm, which she runs and which is called the second largest stud farm for Arabian horses in the U.S.

In Des Moines the group were guests of Mr. and Mrs. David Kruidenier for an overnight visit. In the Kruidenier home poetry was read and songs were sung in various languages from India, Africa, China, Japan, and Europe. Mr. Kruidenier is vice president of the Des Moines Register and Tribune.

Brunch was provided by John Brady, president of Brady Motorfrate of Des Moines, in his apartment at 3663 Grand Ave.

Students making the tours were Tomihiro and Yumiko Kumagai, Ayako Yamada, Takako Uchino, Yumiko Tsumura, and Hatsuyoshi Tauchi, all of Japan; Daniachew Worku, Ethiopia; Wang Ching-lin, Taiwan; Wong May, Singapore; U Sam Oeur, Cambodia; Taban and Lucy Loliyong, Uganda; Jyoti and Meenakshi Datta, India; and Michael Dennis Browne and Peter Clothier, England.

Engle said, "The International Writing Program obviously needs so much more money than the University can or should be asked to give. No university could put as much money into one program of this kind as it needs."

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For this reason he has received support from many patrons, the list of which follows: W. Averell Harriman, Washington, D.C.; Gardner Cowles Jr.; Des Moines Register and Tribune (Cowles Charitable Trust); Reader's Digest; Time-Life Inc.; Fisher Governor Co., Marshalltown; Northern Natural Gas Co., Omaha; Avon Foundation and Hill Family Foundation, St. Paul; Iowa Electric Light and Power Co., Cedar Rapids; J.D.R. 3rd Fund; Edwin T. Meredith Foundation, Des Moines; Iowa Manufacturing Co., Cedar Rapids; Amana Refrigeration; Fred Maytag Family Foundation, Newton; Mrs. Marshall Field, New York City; Emma L. Reppert, Santa Barbara, Calif.; National Endowment on the Humanities, Washington, D.C.; WMT Broadcasting, Cedar Rapids; U.S. Steel; Iowa Steel and Iron, Cedar Rapids; Franklin D. Trueblood, Chicago; and Mrs. Pearl Minor, Mason City.